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ABSTRACT

In light of pressures on higher education institutions to improve efficiency and effectiveness, York University (Ontario, Canada) undertook a research program that included a survey of student satisfaction. The survey sought information on student satisfaction with elements of their academic program and program services, the extent to which the various methods used by the faculty and university to communicate with students were effective, the quality of non-academic services, and the extent of student involvement in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. To facilitate further in-depth analysis, demographic data such as hours of paid work, gender, grade point average, year level, and race were also collected. The survey was sent to a random sample of students, approximately 12 percent of the 43,000 member student body, stratified by student year. The overall response rate was 37.5 percent. Results showed a high degree of overall student satisfaction across a wide range of items. Students wanted more computing services. They also wanted choice courses to be more available. Also, female students were less satisfied than males. Finally, there was a disparity between student perception of quality in their own academic programs and their teachers which received a high rating, and the university in general which received a much lower rating. It was concluded that this indicated that York University continued to have a serious reputational problem with undergraduates which must be addressed. (JB)

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ED 388 188

Student Satisfaction at York University, Canada

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1.0 BACKGROUND

The recent focus on issues such as accountability, quality control, student assessment, and value-for-money auditing, has forced universities in North America and Europe to examine what they do, how they do it, and how they might do it better and/or cheaper. Increasingly, government funding bodies are requesting increasingly detailed information on these issues and linking performance to resource allocation.

York University is Canada's third largest University with an enrolment of 43,000 students and 1,220 full-time faculty. The Faculty of Arts (which includes the Department of Physical Education, Recreation, and Athletics, the Department of Psychology, the Department of Geography, and the Department of Mathematics and Statistics) is one of nine Faculties at York. The Faculty has 520 full-time faculty and 17,500 students encompassing approximately half of the undergraduate student body and is responsible for approximately 80 percent of graduate teaching and enrolment.

Given its large size, the Faculty found it increasingly important to keep abreast of external developments and to develop an institutional research programme that would respond to existing and emerging concerns of the University's senior administration and external regulators and funders. Thus, as part of a larger research programme, in the spring of 1993, the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts undertook a student satisfaction survey to gather information regarding students' general satisfaction with various elements of their academic programme and academic programme services, the extent to which the various methods used by the Faculty and University to communicate with students are effective, the quality of non-academic services, and the extent of student involvement in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

To facilitate further in-depth analysis, demographic data such as hours of paid work, gender, grade point average, year level, and race were also collected. This paper, however, only reports on the initial findings (comparison of means, frequency counts, etc) with some attention to gender and year of study.

The survey was sent to a random sample of students, approximately 12 percent of the student body, stratified by year of study. The overall response rate was 37.5 percent, as shown in Table 1, with the highest response rate (40.9%) in Year 4. The lowest response rate was 34.5 percent in Year 1.

The survey was administered in early March 1993 and one follow-up reminder card was sent. The overall response rate is certainly within a range from which careful generalizations that would be representative of the Faculty could be made.

Table 1. Response Rate by Year Of Study.

	Total 1992 Faculty of Arts Students	1992 Faculty of Arts Survey Group	Response N	Rate %
Year 1	6164	747	258	34.5 %
Year 2	4725	590	234	39.7 %
Year 3	5009	628	237	37.7 %
Year 4	1882	232	95	40.9 %
Total	17780	2197	824	37.5 %

2.0 LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

Although the overall response rate is 37.5 percent, caution should always be exercised before careful generalizations and tentative conclusions are drawn from the data. However, a dataset of 824 students still contains much interesting and valuable information. When the dataset is compared to Faculty level data, it shows that the number of female students is slightly over-represented (64.7 percent of respondents compared to 60.1 percent of the Faculty population) as well as the number of residence students (10.6 percent of the respondents lived in residence compared to only 4.7 percent of the Faculty population). Consequently, the survey results may suggest a higher level of involvement in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities than is the case. In addition, those students who have had a more positive experience at York may have been more inclined to respond to the survey than those who were not as well satisfied. Hence, a higher level of student satisfaction may be implied than actually exists. However, the opposite could also be said as well. In sample surveys, these 2 factors are generally considered to balance out.

3.0 ORGANIZATION OF THE SURVEY

The survey was divided into five sections; in the first section, the extent of student satisfaction with respect to their academic programme and academic programme services was investigated. The second section asked questions about the extent to which students were likely to utilize various sources for obtaining information about academic deadlines or social events; the third section asked students to rate the quality of various non-academic services; the fourth

section asked about involvement in student life and social integration into the York community; and finally the fifth section contained a sequence of demographic and academic background questions.

For the majority of questions, students were asked to give a rating based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = very satisfied or very good, and 5 = very dissatisfied or very poor. In analyzing the data, the mean on this 5-point scale was used to reflect the degree of satisfaction (from lowest=most satisfaction to highest=least satisfaction). For example, a mean score lower than 3.0 indicates that most students are more or less satisfied, while a mean score higher than 3.0 indicates that most students are not satisfied.

4.0 STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

Students were asked to indicate the extent of their satisfaction with a wide range of academic programmes as well as academic resources and services ranging from the accessibility of professors and teaching assistants to the availability of library resources and hours of operation of the library.

The data in Table 2 show that there is a high degree of overall student satisfaction across a wide range of items encompassing academic programmes and academic resources and services. Of particular note is the fact that respondents are pleased with the quality of instruction, their academic programme, the hours of library operation, the accessibility of professors and the accessibility of teaching assistants. The Centre for Academic Writing received the highest mean rating although only 35 percent of the sample used the Centre.

Students are not pleased, however, with the availability of computer resources, the availability of courses selected (scheduling) and the availability of courses of choice. The availability of courses of choice is a continual problem in an environment where resources are severely strained and is exacerbated by the fact that the Faculty has endured significant budget cuts which have reduced the number of courses available. The availability of specific courses in a specific time slot is something that the Faculty has less control over as all undergraduate day time classes cannot be scheduled to meet individual students' or professors' needs. In terms of access to computer resources, one possible explanation for this general dissatisfaction is that handwritten reports and essays are becoming less acceptable, thus requiring students to use a computer. However, many of the computer labs have limited hours, and moreover, they operate on a first-come-first-served basis. As a result, students could spend a great deal of time simply waiting to use a computer. Since the survey was administered (March 1993) there has been an expansion of the computing opportunities available to students in the Faculty.

Table 2. Extent of Student Satisfaction with the Academic Services

	N	Mean
Centre for Academic Writing	305	2.37
Quality of instruction	817	2.47
Your Academic Programme	798	2.47
Hours of library operation	799	2.49
Accessibility of teaching assistants	775	2.49
Accessibility of professors	794	2.52
Size of tutorials	787	2.56
Fairness of grading in courses	820	2.62
Voice Response Enrolment System	815	2.65
Office of Student Programmes	593	2.69
Math Learning Centre *	92	2.71
Advising Centre	485	2.76
Service provided by the department administrative staff	576	2.80
Availability of academic advising	665	2.81
Availability of library resources	803	2.85
Size of classes	816	2.89
Availability of computer resources	469	3.03
Availability of courses selected (scheduling)	821	3.22
Availability of courses of choice	822	3.35

* The Math Learning Centre was closed for budgetary reasons in May, 1994.

The high level of general satisfaction by all students on most items is the proper contextual basis for analyzing differences in responses to the items in Table 1 by gender or year level.

4.1 Gender

The data show that female students, while generally satisfied, were less satisfied compared to male students on a wide range of items: for example, the availability of library resources, the availability of courses of choice, the availability of courses (scheduling), the size of tutorials, the availability of computer resources, the availability

of academic advising, the Voice Response Enrolment System, the service provided by administrative staff, the service provided by Department Administrative staff, the Centre for Academic Writing, and the Advising Centre.

It is difficult to determine why females are not as satisfied as males with the above items, but one could speculate that female dissatisfaction with access to computer resources could be related to not wanting to be on campus in the evening for safety reasons. The choice of major may also provide some insight. For example, there is less enrolment pressure in the Department of Economics and the Department of Mathematics and Statistics where male students outnumber female students, compared to severe enrolment pressures in the Department of Sociology and the Department of Psychology where female students outnumber male students.

4.2 Year Level

In terms of satisfaction by year of study level, on many items the data show that as students progress toward the fourth year of academic study, their level of satisfaction increases. Exceptions to this are items such as the hours of library operation, the availability of academic advising, and the Office of Student Programmes. One possible explanation for the dissatisfaction with the availability of academic advising for upper year students is that as students near graduation, they may wish for more opportunities to discuss with academic advisors; matters such as whether or not they have sufficient courses to graduate, and more importantly, the correct courses. In addition, since upper year students are steps away from the job market, they may be looking for additional information on possible career choices and plans for the future. The implementation of upper year academic advising programmes in the Advising Centre as well as the Departments/Divisions/Colleges is a priority for the Faculty of Arts. Career planning takes place in the Office of Career Services.

5.0 WHAT IS THE STUDENTS' OVERALL PERCEPTION OF THE ACADEMIC QUALITY OF YORK UNIVERSITY?

Students were asked to indicate their perceptions of the quality of their particular programme or major, the academic quality of the University, the academic quality of their fellow students, the quality of their professors and the quality of their teaching assistants. For these questions, students were asked to give a rating based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = high quality, and 5 = low quality.

It is clear that students in the Faculty of Arts have a very high regard for their academic programme, especially those in fourth year. The responses by gender were relatively consistent with each other with the exception of the academic quality of fellow students, where females had a higher regard for their fellow students (a mean of 2.57 for females compared to a mean of 2.75

for males). As shown in Table 3, students rated their programme the highest, followed by professors, York University, teaching assistants, and finally fellow students. It is interesting that students' perceptions of their academic programme and their perceptions of their professors receive higher quality ratings compared to the University.

The quality of an institution is comprised of the quality of its programmes and its professors. This makes intuitive sense as universities are *bottom-heavy* organizations and if professors are not of high quality, then a programme(s) cannot be of high quality. However, the data indicate that students in the Faculty of Arts do not subscribe to this notion as their perception of the quality of York University is far-removed from their perception of the quality of their programme or professors. This indicates that York University continues to have a serious reputational problem with undergraduate students which must be addressed.

Table 3. Perception of the Academic Quality at York University

	N	Mean
Academic quality of your programme/major	802	2.14
Quality of professors	820	2.18
Academic quality of York University	817	2.29
Quality of teaching assistants	785	2.62
Academic quality of your fellow students	785	2.64

6.0 COMMUNICATING INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

This section of the survey attempted to assess the effectiveness of various methods of communicating with students. Students were asked to indicate how likely they were to utilize various sources of information about academic deadlines and academic or social events on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = very likely, and 5 = not very likely.

The data in Table 4 show that in terms of the likelihood of accessing information about **academic deadlines**, students are most likely to utilize the lecture schedule, information received in the mail, the University calendar, and Department/Division mini-calendars. Students were less likely to utilize information in the student newspaper, or notices posted on the walls across campus. This may be a result of the plethora of information contained on many noticeboards. Thus, if the Faculty wanted to remind students about an upcoming academic deadline such as the final drop-date for courses, or the deadline for submitting applications to graduate, it should be aware of the limitations of notices posted on walls and not rely on notices posted on walls as the only method of communicating with students.

One particularly interesting observation is that in **all** questions, females were more likely to utilize the sources listed for obtaining information compared to males. The data also show that as students progress by year level, they are less likely to use the student newspaper for academic deadlines, looking more to departmental mini-calendars instead.

In terms of accessing information **about academic or social events**, students are more likely to "tune-in" if the information is received in the mail. Again, notices posted on walls seem to be an ineffective way to communicate information. However, mailing information to all students about all academic and social events is very costly.

Table 4. How Likely Are Students to Use Sources of Information

	N	Mean
Information about Academic Deadlines		
Lecture Schedule	814	1.84
Information received in the mail	811	1.89
University Calendar	790	1.90
Department/Division mini-calendars	741	2.28
Excalibur (Student Newspaper)	794	2.47
Notices posted on walls	765	3.46
Information about academic or social events		
Information received in the mail	797	2.09
Excalibur (Student Newspaper)	783	2.38
Notices posted on walls	771	3.21

7.0 THE QUALITY OF NON-ACADEMIC SERVICES AT YORK?

This section asked students to rate the quality of a number of non-academic services, some available only in the Faculty of Arts, others available University-wide. The Likert scale as outlined in Section 5 was used: 1 = high quality and 5 = low quality.

As shown in Table 5, students are impressed with the quality of service provided by the Counselling and Development Centre (CDC), the Office of Student Programmes (Arts), the Registrar's Office (WOB), the Bookstore, Office of Student Affairs, and the athletic facilities. The number of respondents for the CDC (177), the Office of Student Affairs (388), and the

athletic facilities (344) is low (not all students use these services), so the means should be interpreted with this in mind.

Non-academic service areas that had low levels of satisfaction were the Office of Financial Aid and the Office of Student Accounts with means of 3.02 and 3.15 respectively. The Parking Office received the worst rating with a mean of 3.23.

One could speculate that the low quality rating received by the Office of Financial Aid and the Office of Student Accounts may not necessarily reflect the actual degree of service, but rather a reflection of the unmet expectations of those who used the service. For example, a student who requires financial aid and does not receive what they wish, may rate the service poorly, regardless of the customer service provided. In August 1994, the Office of Financial Aid instituted a wrist-band policy in consultation with student groups, which reduced significantly the amount of time students spent lining up to access their Ontario Student Assistance Plan (Student Loans) allocation. One reason for the very low quality rating given the Parking Office may be the frustration over the lack of parking spaces at York, particularly if students have paid for a sticker and arrive on campus and are not able to find a parking spot. However, a mean of over 3.0 indicates that more students are not satisfied compared to those than are satisfied, and it may be that the parking office does in fact provide atrocious service.

There was no significant difference in responses by gender. However, the longer students were at York, they became less and less satisfied with the services provided by the Offices of Financial Aid and Student Accounts.

Table 5. Rating of the Quality of Non-Academic Services

	N	Mean
Counselling and Development Centre (BSB)	177	2.40
Office of Student Programmes (3rd Floor Ross)	710	2.41
Registrar's Office (West Office Building)	618	2.44
Bookstore (York Lanes)	817	2.47
Office of Student Affairs (Central Square)	388	2.60
Athletic Facilities	344	2.74
Student Accounts (Central Square)	575	3.02
Office of Financial Aid (Central Square)	362	3.15
Parking Office (East Office Building)	513	3.23

8.0 PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

This section of the survey asked students to indicate the extent of their involvement (by checking either yes or no for participation) in campus life and extracurricular activities. The results (Table 6) show that almost half of respondents attended a pub night. Males were more frequent pub patrons compared to females (51.1 percent to 44.6 percent), and younger students (years 1-3) were more frequent pub patrons compared to older students (year 4). Other activities with high student participation include public lectures (34.1%), theatre/movie/concert events (30.4%), art exhibits (29.2%), college events (26.2%), and athletic events (24%). Students were least likely to become involved in one of the newspapers on campus (8.1%) or be a member of a varsity sports team (4.2%).

The extent of participation in some events was skewed by gender. For example, males are more likely to be involved in attending athletic events, being a member of a varsity sports team, and/or being a member of an intramural sports team. One reason perhaps for this difference is the fact that many of the athletic events, varsity sports, and/or intramural sports, are held late in the evening, when females are less likely to feel comfortable walking around campus.

With respect to variation by year level, the results indicate that students in upper years are more likely to attend political events, public lectures, art exhibits, and theatre or concert events, but less likely to attend pub nights.

Table 6. Attendance & Participation in Extracurricular Activities on Campus

	N	% Attended / Participated
Pub Nights	826	46.9
Public Lectures	826	34.1
Theatre/Movie/Concert Events	826	30.4
Art Exhibits	826	29.2
College Events	826	26.2
Student Clubs	826	25.8
Attended Athletic Events	826	24.0
Dances	826	20.7
Political Events	826	14.6
Member of Intramural Sports Team	826	12.2
Newspapers	826	8.1
Other	826	6.3
Member of Varsity Sports Team	826	4.2

If a student did not participate in extracurricular activities, or did not participate as much as they would have liked to, the survey attempted to elicit the reasons (Table 7). The main reason for lack of participation in extracurricular activities was the amount of time devoted to studying (65.7%). Other reasons were part-time employment (57.6%), transportation to and from campus (50.8%), involvement in extracurricular activities outside of the University (26.8%), family obligations (31.2%), and campus safety concerns (29.5%). Thus, many students would like to become more involved in extracurricular activities than they currently are. A very interesting statistic is that 22.7% of the respondents indicated that they were not even aware that opportunities for extracurricular activities existed.

The data by year of study level show that students in upper years indicated time spent studying as the predominant reason for not participating in extracurricular activities. Similarly, it is not surprising that only students in the earlier levels indicated lack of knowledge of such activities as a reason.

In terms of differences by gender, the results of the data are very disturbing. The data indicates, glaringly, that a major barrier exists for females students in terms of participating in extracurricular activities because of campus safety concerns. Forty-four percent of females indicated campus safety concerns as a reason for lack of participation in extracurricular activities compared to 2.8 percent of males. This has significant implications for the undergraduate experience for females since many females are unwilling, because of safety concerns, to participate in the full array of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities available in the University. Thus, campus safety and participation in extracurricular activities is an issue that needs to be addressed to help facilitate the inclusion of females in the wide variety of activities that take place in the evenings.

Table 7. Reasons for Non-Participation in Extracurricular Activities on Campus

	N	% Who Listed as a Reason
Time spent studying	825	65.7
Part-time Employment	825	57.6
Transportation to and from the Campus	825	50.8
Involved in Extracurricular activities outside of University	825	36.8
Family Obligations	825	31.2
Campus safety concerns	825	29.5
Not aware such opportunities existed	825	22.7
Other	826	5.3

9.0 STUDENT IMPRESSIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY?

Undergraduate students develop positive or negative "impressions" or "perceptions" of universities before they arrive at an institution and these impressions or perceptions may change once they arrive and start an academic programme. The survey attempted to determine, using open ended questions, the positive and negative aspects of students' overall academic and social experience at York University.

Students were asked to indicate the **ONE ASPECT** of their overall academic and social experience that made the greatest impression and the **ONE ASPECT** of their overall academic and social experience that made the worst (least) impression. All responses were coded for the purposes of analysis. In terms of the greatest impression, 61.6 percent (508/825) of students answered the question creating 19 variables. The top 6 variables are shown in Table 8. In terms of the worst impression, 72.8 percent (601/825) of students answered the questions creating 23 variables. The top 6 variables are shown in Table 9.

9.1 POSITIVE IMPRESSIONS

Of the students above that took the time to provide a written comment, over one-quarter (27.8%) cited their professors as the **ONE ASPECT** of their academic and social experience at York University that made the greatest impression. Other interesting answers received were comments related to the students' personal development (12.6%), involvement in extracurricular activities (10.8%), tolerant student attitudes which encompasses positive attitudes, free exchange of opinions and ideas, and open debate (10.4%). Course selection and the programmes offered, along with the diversity of the student body also made a relatively good impression on students. Interestingly, there were very small differences in responses by gender. However, upper year students were especially captivated by their professors. This finding is consistent with the data in Section #4 that shows satisfaction with academic programme increases as year of study level increases.

Table 8. Aspect of Academic and Social Experiences that made the Greatest Impression

	% who responded
Professors	27.8
Personal Development	12.6
Extracurricular Activity	10.8
Student Attitudes	10.4
Course selection / availability / programmes offered	9.4
Student Diversity	8.1
Other (13 variables)	20.9

9.2 NEGATIVE IMPRESSIONS

Of the students that took the time to write a written comment in this section, 16.5 percent indicated that the **ONE ASPECT** of their academic and social experience at York University that impressed them the least was the size and population of York. This variable encompasses responses that commented on the negative effect of crowding - in class sizes, in the student centre, in line-ups for financial aid, hours of the library, availability of library resources, and student accounts, and the bookstore. Other negative impressions were course selection and the availability of courses (15.2%), professors (15.0%), the administration and bureaucracy (6.8%), negative student attitudes (6.5%) and teaching assistants (5.3%). Dissatisfaction with teaching assistants was voiced primarily by students in first year and female students.

Table 9. Aspects of Academic and Social Experiences that made the Worst Impression

	% who responded Yes
Population Size (crowding, class size, line-ups, etc.)	16.5
Course selection / availability / programmes offered	15.3
Professors	15.0
Administration / Bureaucracy (rules & regulations, etc.)	6.8
Student Attitudes	6.5
T.A's	5.3
Other (17 variables)	5.3

9.3 OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

After asking students about the best and worst parts of their experiences at York, the survey asked students to give an overall rating of their academic and social experience on a five point Likert scale from "very satisfactory" to "unsatisfactory". The results show that 64.7 percent of students indicated that they were very satisfied or satisfied, 27.1 percent were neutral (neither satisfied or dissatisfied) and 8.4 percent were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. The mean was 2.33 which falls between satisfactory and neutral. There was no difference in means by gender but a significant difference by year level with 72.3 percent of upper year students being either very satisfied or satisfied.

Given their overall satisfaction (or lack of satisfaction for some students), students were asked to indicate (yes/no) whether or not they would recommend the Faculty of Arts at York University to other students. A large majority (88.6%) indicated that they would recommend the

Faculty of Arts at York University to other students, with females (89.5%) and fourth year students (91.3%) giving higher ratings. The large number of students who exhibit overall satisfaction is encouraging. but the implications of the data are that 11.4 percent of our students would not recommend the Faculty of Arts at York University to other students.

10. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

In order to facilitate further analysis, the survey requested demographic and background data from respondents, including their gender, age, grade point average, average number of hours worked, ethnicity, campus status (residence or commuter), major, and citizenship. This paper only refers to variations by gender and year of study level. Additional analyses by age, ethnicity, average number of hours of work, and major are ongoing.

10.1 Part-time Work

The data indicate that 65 percent of students work for pay. The proportion of students working for pay increases as students progress through their academic programmes (70.3% in fourth year). Thirty-five percent of students worked an average of $\geq$ 15 hours per week, and this proportion increases to 40.6 percent in fourth year. The same proportion of females worked compared to males, but males were more likely to work a larger number of hours.

10.2. Grade Point Average?

Respondents were asked to indicate their grade point average (GPA) at the end of August '92, the last academic year they had completed. There was only an 80 percent response rate to this question, perhaps because students may not have remembered, or did not want to remember, their cumulative grade point average. In addition, students in first year were completing the survey when they had not received, or had only partially received, course results. Taking this into account, 51 percent of students had a grade point average of greater than 6.0 (B). Men are much more likely to have a lower grade point average than women - 3 percent of men had a grade point average of 2.0 (D) or less compared to .9 percent of women.

10.3. Race, Ethnicity, "Visible Minorities"

Recently, there has been pressure exerted by the Provincial Government to collect data with respect to the race and ethnicity of students in terms of determining the number of "visible minorities" on campus. The collection of these data was deemed justified by the Ontario Human Rights Commission as long as it is to be used for policy development purposes. A number of previous surveys conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University have attempted to determine the number of visible minorities at York.

However, as these surveys have shown[1], the issue of who should or can be categorized as a "visible minority" is problematic and some visible minorities do not categorize themselves as such.

In this questionnaire, students were given the opportunity to self-identify themselves as a visible minority (yes or no). If they self-identified themselves as a visible minority, respondents were then asked to indicate of which group they considered themselves to be a member. When coded it was found that this data was fraught with inconsistencies. An inspection of the raw data revealed that a large number of people had classified themselves as visible minorities when in fact they were not.

The data were recoded to delete inappropriate and/or illogical responses. After recoding the data, the results show that 18.8 percent of respondents considered themselves to be members of a visible minority group, with females (20.9%) more likely to belong to such groups compared to males (15.0%). As shown in Table 10, the majority of visible minorities described themselves as Asian (34.7%), Black (19.3%), East Indian (8.0%), West Indian (6.7%), Native (3.3%), Filipino (2.7%), Pakistani (2.0%) and mixed heritage (2.0%). A large number of students (18%), indicated that they considered themselves to be visible minorities but did not indicate to which group they belonged.

An interesting finding is that the percentage of visible minority students drops from 19.6 percent in Year 1 to 10.8 percent in Year 4, indicating that fewer members of visible minority groups pursue Honours Degrees. The results seem to indicate that many visible minorities, particulary Asian students which are one-third of visible minority respondents, opt for Ordinary Degrees. However, extreme caution should be exercised in attributing any significance to the fact that the number of visible minorities drops in Year 4 because as the number of respondents in Year 4 (N=10) is so small compared to the Year 4 total number of respondents (N=92).

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[1] See William Found, *Who are York's Undergraduates? Results of the University's 1991 Comprehensive Student Survey* Toronto: Office of the Vice-President (Institutional Affairs), York University, 1992, and Paul Grayson with Tammy Chi and Darla Rhyne, *The Social Construction of 'Visible Minority' for Students of Chinese Origin.* Toronto: Institute for Social Research, 1994.

Table 10. Visible Minorities by Group.

	%
Asian	34.7
Black	19.3
Unspecified	18.0
East Indian	8.0
West Indian	6.7
Native	3.3
Filipino	2.7
Pakistani	2.0
Mixed Heritage	2.0
Eurasian	0.7
Islamic	0.7
South American	0.7
Sri Lankan	0.7
Taiwanese	0.7
N=	150

10.4 International Students at York University?

Approximately 4 percent of respondents were International Students. There are more male International Students (5.3%) compared to female International Students (4.0%). As International Students reach fourth year, their numbers diminished significantly. Since a substantial portion of International Students at York are of Asian background, it explains the decline of visible minority students, in Year 4, as shown in Section 10.3.

10.5 Residence Students?

The results show that 10.6% of respondents lived in a campus residence. More males (13.0%) than females (9.8%) lived in a campus residence and the proportion of

- students living in residence in fourth year is significantly lower (5.3%) compared to first year (13%).

11. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

A student satisfaction survey is a very useful tool to measure how well a Department/Faculty/University is meeting students' needs. The particular questions asked will depend on the objectives and the locus of the survey, for example, if it is initiated by a department, a faculty, or the University. The Faculty of Arts student satisfaction study was undertaken to determine how well the Faculty was meeting students' academic needs, to measure the quality of non-academic services provided by the Faculty and University and to assess student involvement in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, with the intent of identifying areas where corrective action may be necessary.

As an institution of higher learning it is encouraging to see the high degree of overall student satisfaction across a wide range of items encompassing academic programmes and academic resources and services. This data provides a benchmark from which future studies can be measured. There is significant work to be accomplished in terms of making available to students adequate computing resources, courses in time slots that are acceptable, and increasing the number of "high demand" courses.

The provision of computing services has been expanded, however, but there still exists continual pressure from students for further expansion, especially as they learn more about the resources available on the "information highway." The expenditure cuts imposed by government, making York and other universities in the Province of Ontario do more with less, limits the flexibility to provide additional courses of choice. The existing scheduling patterns of faculty and students already limits the scheduling of courses in unpopular time slots such as Friday from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The dissatisfaction with the availability of courses of choice is also shown in other data collected by the Faculty such as the average course load per student, which has declined significantly over the past ten years from 4.47 full-course equivalents in 1980-81 to 3.9 full-course equivalents in 1994-95. Thus, of the three areas where there is very low student satisfaction, it appears as if there is limited room to make improvements.

Additional analyses are planned to explore the gender dimensions of the results. On many items the data show that female students, while generally satisfied, were less satisfied compared to male students. It was speculated above that female dissatisfaction with access to computer resources could be related to not wanting to be on campus in the evening for safety reasons. It was noted that the choice of major may also provide some insight.

The analyses by year of study level shows that as students progress toward the fourth year of academic study (Honours versus Ordinary Degree), their level of satisfaction increases. This is probably to be expected as it is the academically able student that pursues an Honours Degree (4 years), and Honours Degree students are more likely to apply to graduate or professional

school. Upper year students were particularly dissatisfied with the availability of academic advising. The implementation of upper year academic advising programmes in the Advising Centre as well as the Departments/Divisions/Colleges is a priority for the Faculty of Arts.

It is interesting that students' perceptions of their academic programme and their perceptions of their professors receive higher quality ratings compared to their perception about the University. Thus students' perception of the quality of York University is far-removed from their perception of the quality of their academic programme or professors and indicates that York University continues to have a serious reputational problem with undergraduate students which must be addressed. This must be addressed via the admissions office in publications, liaison with guidance counsellors, and asking students who have had satisfying learning experiences to return to their home "high school" to extol the virtues of their experiences at York.

A positive relationship between students and professors is fundamental to obtaining a high quality education in universities. A large number of students had positive comments about their professors (27.8%) but a significant number of students (15%) had negative comments about their professors. The positive comments outweigh the negative comments, but the existence of negative comments indicates that further research needs to done to get at the root of student complaints and to deal with them as effectively as possible.

The largest negative item identified by students was "population size", which is a reflection of the strained physical capacity of existing buildings at York University and the imposition of government cutbacks that have lead to reduced services in non-academic areas. The second largest negative item was course selection and availability which are also constrained by the imposition of government cutbacks. The challenge to the Faculty of Arts over the next few years is to make improvements in the selection of courses offered, while continuing to operate in an environment where financial resources will be reduced further.